



THE COURIER

News from the Museums of the Bethel Historical Society

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Plans Underway for BHS 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2016

The Bethel Historical Society was established at the Bethel Library on May 31, 1966, under the guidance of local historian Eva M. Bean (1895-1969) and other local enthusiasts. Accordingly, in just a few weeks' time, the Society will begin mark its semicentennial, or 50th anniversary! To prepare for this major milestone, staff and members of the Programs, Exhibits and Publications Committee have been at work planning special programs, new exhibits and fun ways to mark a half-century of collecting, preserving and sharing local and regional history. Among the projects/events already in place are the ever-popular "Antiquarian Supper" (a Bethel tradition dating back to 1855), a talk on maple sugaring history, an exhibition focusing on the western Rangeley Lakes area, a musical event/fundraiser featuring a well-known participant from the "Music without Borders" concert series, and much, much more. A Golden Anniversary Programming Schedule will be published early in 2016, with frequent updates and additions appearing on the Society's Facebook page and in e-News posts. Stay tuned as we plan a year's worth of interesting, educational and enjoyable activities!



Will Chapman Joins Staff as Librarian/Archivist



Society Executive Director Randall Bennett is pleased to announce that William F. ("Will") Chapman has been hired as the Society's first professional librarian/archivist, and that he commenced work in early June organizing and processing the Society's extensive collection of books, manuscripts, photographs, maps and other related materials in preparation for their relocation to the "Charles R. Huntoon Center for Archives, Library and Museum Collections," now under construction at the O'Neil Robinson House.

The son of Tony and Amy Wight Chapman of Greenwood, Will attended Bowdoin College for one year and graduated from the University of Maine at Augusta with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Information and Library Services. In September 2012, he became a reference assistant at the Auburn Public Library — a position he left at the

end of May to join the team at BHS. In addition to his employment at the Society three days a week, he continues to work as assistant archivist at the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village Library in New Gloucester.

A descendant of the Rev. Eliphaz Chapman, who chose "Bethel" (from the Book of Genesis) when the town was incorporated in 1796, Chapman will oversee the consolidation of the Society's library and archival collections now located or stored in three adjacent buildings: the Robinson House, Mason House and Hastings Homestead. Besides cataloging collections and assisting with the development of digital resources at BHS, Will has completely redesigned the Society's website, responds to remote research requests, and supervises on-site research by students, scholars and genealogists. The Society is extremely pleased to have secured the services of such a dedicated and well-informed young person to take charge of one of its most significant resources. Welcome, Will!

President's Column

Dear friends,

This year's Annual Fund Campaign is a very special one because it serves as a launch pad for our 50th anniversary in 2016! Those of you who remember the Bethel Historical Society's "birth" in 1966 will especially appreciate how the vision of our founders to collect and preserve the past has resulted in an outstanding collection of books, manuscripts, photographs and objects that truly make the Society the "Memory House" of our community and area.

Speaking of "Memory House," have you stopped by to see the "Charles R. Huntoon Center for Archives, Library and Museum Collections" now being built, thanks to the financial support of Mr. Huntoon—who specifically asked to finish the planned reconstruction of the Robinson House barn? Have you seen the new signs greeting visitors to each of our Museums, or the new, historically-accurate courtyard fence at the Mason House? Have you met Will Chapman, our new part-time librarian/archivist? Yes, our organization has come a long way since 1966!

Of course, the Society's progress over the years would have been impossible without the financial support of members and friends who give to the Annual Fund. Such donations represent 30% of our yearly income and help cover our daily operating costs.

So, how can you help us mark the Society's 50th anniversary? Our Annual Fund goal is \$47,000, and for this campaign, a special category of "Golden Anniversary Donors" has been created for those who decide to either donate \$50 or more as a *first gift*, or who *add* that much (or more) to their 2014 donation. Individuals and organizations falling into this group will be recognized separately in our upcoming "Report of Giving" (published early in 2016). Golden Anniversary Donors also will receive a special commemorative gift in honor of this semi-centennial event. Needless to say, we need and greatly appreciate everyone's donation, regardless of the amount.

Thank you, in advance, for helping us celebrate this significant milestone for BHS!

Sincerely,

Tineke Ouwinga
President, Board of Trustees



From the Librarian/Archivist

Exciting things are happening here every day. As I have watched the rapid progress on the construction of the new Huntoon "barn" at the Robinson House, my most important task has been to plan for the arrangement of the Society's library and archival materials within the new storage facility. Efforts are underway to speed the transition away from the card catalog and towards having all materials indexed within the library's electronic catalog. I am also working to replace inefficient systems of arrangement with methods that follow standard archival practices.

My other major project for the past few months has been organizing, arranging, and cataloging manuscript material from the Gould Academy Archives. This massive trove of correspondence, meeting notes, and other materials received last year from the Academy provides us with an incredibly deep look at the history of one of Bethel's most important institutions. The collections are particularly strong in the critical years during the 1960s and 1970s, when the future of the school seemed uncertain and many different options were being explored. The correspondence from this period allows us unparalleled insight into the minds of the trustees and staff of the school as they faced these decisions.

I have also digitized two large slide collections. The first of these, a large collection of images taken by George Allen during the Oxford County Historic Resource Survey between 1979 and 1981, includes hundreds of buildings throughout Oxford County. The slides from the Oxford County Grange Hall Tour project, undertaken in 2000 and 2001, comprise hundreds of images from events at local grange halls. Both of these valuable collections will soon be able to be fully searched and browsed from the library computer.

William F. Chapman
BHS Librarian/Archivist

White Mountain Art: The 2015 Summer Exhibit

Our special summer exhibition, “Secluded Glens & Noble Landscapes: Traditional White Mountain Art Recaptured,” was well attended and received excellent press online and in print. On view through July and August in the Howe Exhibit Hall, the display featured over 30 contemporary works in the Hudson River School manner by nationally-recognized plein air artists Erik Koeppel and Lauren Sansaricq, juxtaposed with a large collection of 19th century White Mountain landscapes privately owned by a Bethel collector. Based on a similar exhibit held at BHS in 2013, the show resulted in the sale of several of the outstanding paintings by Koeppel and Sansaricq.

Bethel’s status as a popular resort community and gateway to the White Mountain region of western Maine and northern New Hampshire has provided the Society with numerous opportunities to focus on this famed district. For instance, past BHS exhibits have included “Pictures Serene and Sublime: Traditional White Mountain Art Recaptured” (2013); “The White Mountain Club of Portland: Exploration and Adventure in the ‘Crystal Hills’ 1873-1884” (2011-2013); “Glorious Ridges and Princely Peaks: Artistic Visions of the White Mountains” (2011); “Among Our White Mountain Souvenirs” (2007-2008); and “Scenery of the White Mountains” (2000).

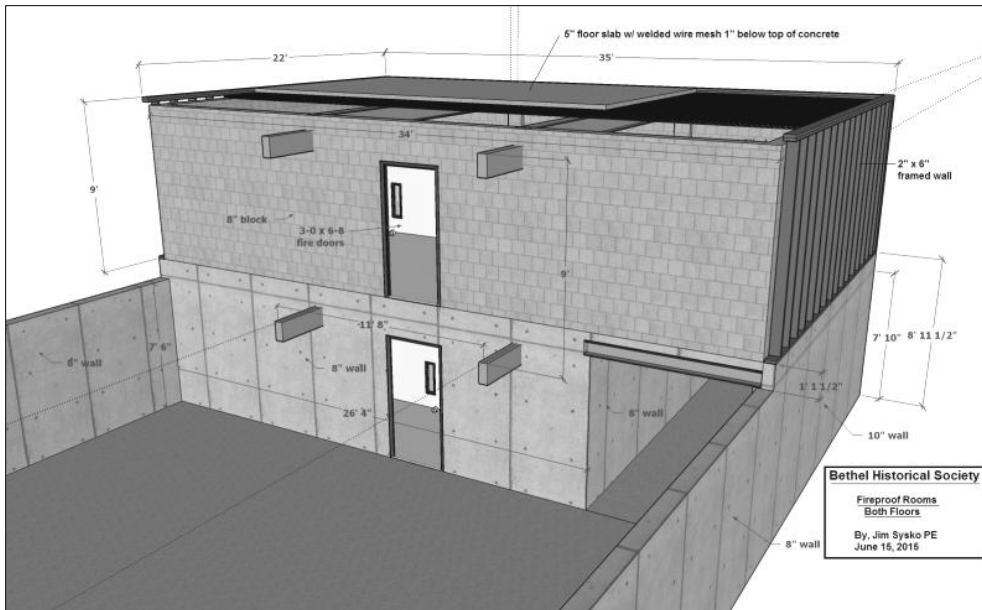
The Society extends sincere thanks to the many volunteers who manned this summer’s art exhibit during its eight-week run, making it possible to keep the display open on days when the Mason House period rooms are normally closed.



Photos, clockwise from top left: display of contemporary art; (l to r) artists Lauren Sansaricq and Erik Koeppel, with Marvin Ouwinga (past BHS president) and Tineke Ouwinga (current BHS president) at the exhibit opening; historic White Mountain paintings; “Looking through Crawford Notch from Elephant’s Head,” by Lauren Sansaricq.

Securing the Past for the Future at the Huntoon Center

One of the most valuable components of the new Charles R. Huntoon Center for Archives, Library and Museum Collections at the Robinson House is the considerable space being allocated for fireproof, climate-controlled storage. This long-needed facility consists of two separate vaults constructed of concrete/cement blocks and located one atop another at the north end of the



“barn” (see engineering design plan by Jim Sysko PE, left). Whereas the basement vault will provide secure space for such things as local business records, microfilm negatives, oversized maps and the Society’s extensive run of bound newspapers, the upper (first floor) vault will accommodate a wide range of archival materials likely to be of interest to genealogists, amateur historians and serious scholars of northern New England history.

Stored in unheated wooden buildings, historic artifacts, books, photos, and manuscripts can suffer

from the detrimental effects of variations of temperature and humidity. While staff and volunteers have done their best over the years to limit damage to items kept at the Dr. Moses Mason House, the 200+ year old structure offers less than ideal conditions for the long-term preservation of irreplaceable objects donated by members and friends. As a vibrant regional organization about to mark its 50th anniversary, the Bethel Historical Society has taken a major step toward permanently safeguarding a substantial portion of its holdings.

Rug Hooking Focus of Harvestfest Programs

Both of the Society’s Museums were open on September 19th during Harvestfest, an annual Chamber of Commerce outdoor fair held on the Bethel Hill common. From 10:00 am to 12:30 pm, several local women with skill in rug hooking demonstrated this time-honored craft in the Mason House exhibit hall. During this same time, a modest exhibit of locally-made rugs—plus several historic examples from the Society’s collection—were on display around the hall. Demonstrators included Lois Ruff, Ellen Marshall and Cathy Newell (photo, left), the latter a BHS board member and the person who organized the well-attended morning activities.



At 1:30 pm, author, antique dealer, and rug hooker Judith Burger-Gossart of Salsbury Cove, Maine, presented an illustrated talk about her recently published book, *Sadie’s Winter Dream: Fishermen’s Wives and Maine Sea Coast Mission Hooked Rugs, 1923-1938*. The book was available for purchase and signing after the presentation. The afternoon program was sponsored by the Society’s “Florence Bickford Hastings Traditional Crafts Fund.”

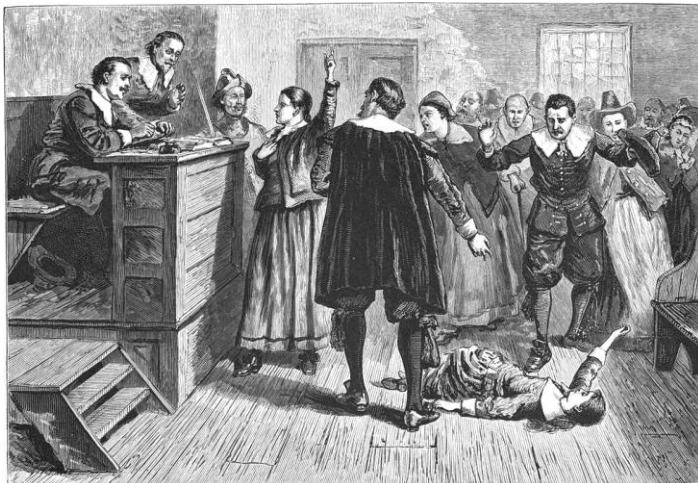


Photos, left to right: BHS member Ellen Marshall examines one of a number of hooked rugs on display at the Mason House on September 19. Afternoon speaker Judith Burger-Gossart of Salsbury Cove, Maine, with three pieces from the Maine Sea Coast Mission (house, upper right, and two maritime-themed rugs on table). Photos courtesy of Cathy Newell

Annual Howe Lecture: The Salem Witchcraft Hysteria

Dr. Emerson W. Baker, Professor of History at Salem State University, presented an absorbing talk about his research into the "witchcraft hysteria" of 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts, to a full house at the annual Stanley Russell Howe Lecture on October 17th. A public historian teaching courses on material culture, archaeology, museums and architectural history, Professor Baker's principal area of interest is seventeenth-century New England. During his presentation, he discussed his recent book, *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience*, which sets the Salem Witch Trials in the broader context of American history from the seventeenth century to the present, and examines their enduring legacy. A limited number of signed copies of the book are currently available through the Society's Museum Shop (open Tuesday thru Friday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, or visit us online at www.bethelhistorical.org).

In 1692 more than 150 people would be accused witchcraft, and 25 would die in the Salem witch trials—the largest witchcraft outbreak in American history. In his illustrated talk, Dr. Baker explored the rich catalogue of explanations that have been put



as a turning point from Puritan communalism to Yankee independence. He also set the trials in the broader context of American history from the 1620s up through the present, and revealed a number of ways their legacy remains with us.

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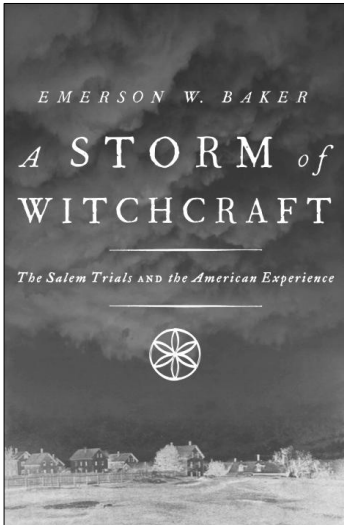
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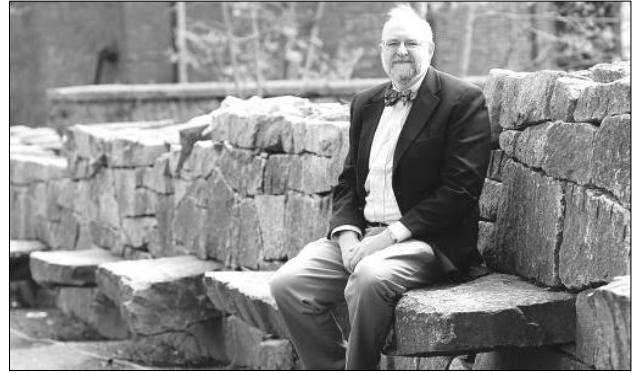
Nancy Stowell White

Indeed, near the end of his talk, he pointed out some fascinating connections between the Salem witch trials and some of the earliest families of European descent to settle in the Bethel area in the late eighteenth century.



Professor Emerson “Tad” Baker is the award-winning author of many works on the history and archaeology of early Maine and New England, including *The Devil of Great Island: Witchcraft and Conflict in Early New England*. Baker received his BA from Bates College, his MA from the University of Maine and his Ph.D. in History from William and Mary. He

has served as an advisor and on-camera expert for the PBS series *Colonial House*. The *Portland Press Herald* says “By almost any measure, Emerson W. Baker’s new history, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, is a masterpiece.” He regularly tweets on the Salem witch trials and early New England history at @EmersonWBaker.



Late Breaking News

We're pleased to announce that the New England Ski Museum's current exhibit, “The Mountains of Maine: Skiing in the Pine Tree State,” will re-open at the Museums of the Bethel Historical Society on June 24, 2016, and remain on view through the winter of 2016-17. The loan has been arranged by the Ski Museum of Maine, which provided many of the images for the exhibit. The New England Ski Museum is located at Cannon Mountain at Franconia Notch, N.H.

50th Anniversary Annual Fund Campaign

Donations to the Bethel Historical Society’s Annual Fund help cover many of our recurring expenses, such as office supplies and heating fuel — basic costs that must be paid if the Society is to maintain daily operations at its two Museums. Fortunately, members and friends have long recognized the value of the Society’s work of collecting, preserving, interpreting, and sharing the region’s history by generously supporting the Annual Fund. In response to this assistance, we promise that all gifts will be wisely managed and carefully spent.

If you have already given to this year’s campaign, thank you so much! If you haven’t donated and would like to make a tax-deductible gift to help keep our doors open and programs available, please send your check to the Society at P.O. Box 12, Bethel, ME 04217. Donations may also be made through our website (bethelhistorical.org) via PayPal or credit card. Gifts of stock are also welcome; please call 207-824-2908 for additional information.

We sincerely appreciate your support!



It’s a Birthday Party!

On Tuesday, May 31, 2016, the Official Observance of the 50th Anniversary of the Bethel Historical Society’s founding at the Bethel Library (above) will take place at the Dr. Moses Mason House (14 Broad Street), beginning at 7:00 pm. There will be special remarks, photos from the past, lots of good food, and, possibly, a few surprises. Mark your calendars!

The “Charles R. Huntton Center for Archives, Library and Museum Collections”



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We extend heartfelt thanks to our Business Partners, whose membership in the Bethel Historical Society is vital to our ability to carry out high-quality programs, exhibits, educational activities, and publications. Please take advantage of the services they offer, and let them know you appreciate their fine support of BHS!

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